



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Related to Infrastructure Issues Water Is Life, and Infrastructure Makes It Happen™**

### **What is “infrastructure”?**

Infrastructure, for **water** and **wastewater**, means the pipes, drains, pumps and treatment facilities that deliver the clean water we drink, and take away and treat the water we have used over and over again. Infrastructure is the water line and sewer pipe under your street, the storm drain at the corner, and the wastewater treatment facility in your community.

### **What is “Water is Life, and Infrastructure Makes It Happen”?**

This is an educational program to help Wichita Water Utilities’ customers and citizens across the county understand the importance of water infrastructure and the need for maintaining it in top operating condition. The goal of the campaign is to start a dialogue between citizens and their local officials to make clean, safe water a priority and to work together to find effective ways to replace, maintain, and upgrade aging infrastructure.

### **Why is infrastructure at Risk of Failing?**

- Infrastructure is aging – needs to be replaced and maintained
- Demands to use clean water in many different ways is growing everyday
- Growing populations overburden systems designed for smaller communities
- New discoveries about pollutants require new and costly treatment facilities

The investments made by a visionary generation of leaders in building public **water** and **wastewater** infrastructure created a system that protects us and improves our quality of life. The last national initiative to improve water quality began over 34 years ago and the remarkable gains from that initiative must be maintained if we are to continue to enjoy their benefits.

### **How does a broken infrastructure endanger a community?**

- Public health - treatment of drinking water has virtually eliminated waterborne diseases such as typhoid, cholera and hepatitis A. But as systems deteriorate, we may face other health challenges from unknown or unseen organisms that can’t be cleaned properly with our current systems.
- The economy - A community needs clean and safe water. Clean water supports industry, homes, businesses, recreation, and tourism. Clean water means jobs in every community across the country.
- The environment - Without properly maintained infrastructure, our rivers, lakes, streams and even the air we breathe may be at risk.



## **FAQs Related to Infrastructure Issues**

### **Water Is Life, and Infrastructure Makes It Happen™**

#### **Have there been any cases of water infrastructure failing or is this a future risk?**

Yes and yes -- most recently a **broken sewer line** caused 48 million gallons of raw sewage to enter the Ala Wai Canal in Waikiki, Hawaii. The contamination spread to a boat harbor and closed Waikiki Beach for several days. The line break followed more than a month of heavy rains that overwhelmed the City's aging system.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1993, **cryptosporidium**, an intestinal parasite found in humans and other vertebrate animals, slipped through the city's water treatment facility, sickened 400,000 people and led to more than 50 deaths. As a result of the outbreak, and the public outrage that followed it, Milwaukee has invested millions in its water system that now far exceeds federal safety standards.

In times of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes (i.e. Katrina's affects on New Orleans and Mississippi's systems and closer to home the tornado and flooding effects on Kansas communities), and other emergencies; already-stressed systems are especially vulnerable to failure. A failure of this magnitude would seriously threaten the environment through the release of untreated wastewater into local waterways. Commerce would grind to a halt without clean water.

#### **What is the National Advisory Committee for Water is Life?**

This is an Alliance that includes **water** and **wastewater** organizations, the business community, and environmental and public health professionals to implement a public outreach program designed to inform and motivate opinion leaders, ratepayers, the public and elected officials to understand the important role of water infrastructure in a community's health, economy and environment, and to work together to find a solution.

#### **What will it take to keep the Wichita Utilities' infrastructure up to par?**

In the next ten years the City of Wichita Water Utilities will need to reinvest:

**Water - \$ 345,415,000**

**Sewer - \$ 200,000,000**

#### **How can individual citizens help solve this problem?**

Citizens can help ensure that clean water stays at the top of the community's agenda by learning more about local plans to meet the **water** and **wastewater** needs of your community, by participating in water conservation, water reuse and water efficiency programs available in your community, and by contacting your local Water Utilities at 268-4504.

Local public officials and citizens must work together to make the health and safety of water a priority and act before the problem becomes a crisis.